

C O M M E N T A R Y

Race-based initiatives: a Christian-right agenda

By Lloyd Williams
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"Today I have stood where once Jefferson Davis stood and took an oath to my people. It is very appropriate then that from this cradle of the Confederacy, this very heart of the great Anglo-Saxon Southland that I say... Segregation today! Segregation tomorrow! Segregation forever!" — Alabama Governor George Wallace's inaugural address, January 14, 1963.

Looks like the Christian Fundamentalists might have a sinister, second agenda besides trying to erase the line separating church and state. This past Election Day, voters in Alabama defeated a proposed amendment to their state constitution which would have, once and for all, repealed laws still on the books mandating separate public schools for "White and colored children" and allowing municipalities to pass poll taxes designed to disenfranchise Black people.

What makes the defeat of the referendum distressing is the fact that John Giles, President of Alabama's Christian Coalition, had spearheaded the fight against it. Giles denies the allegations that racism was the motivating factor behind his position. But there is no other way to explain his reluctance to eradicate such, presumably, unenforceable vestiges of the Jim Crow system of segregation.

Sadly, Giles had several formidable allies in his endeavor, including recently

ousted Alabama Supreme Court Justice Roy Moore, a darling with the religious right for his refusing to remove a granite monument engraved with the Ten Commandments from the lobby of a state office building. Another ally was Tom Parker, a candidate for the vacant seat on the bench, a good ole born again who handed out Confederate Flags during his successful campaign.

The South seems intent on fighting the Civil War forever. Remember how after Neil Young indicted the South in the Sixties for its legacy of slavery and lynchings with his acid anthem, "Southern Man," instead of owning up to its history of intolerance, the rockabilly group Lynyrd Skynyrd responded with "Sweet Home Alabama," a defiant rebel yell which has come to be embraced as the universal redneck rallying cry.

Let's compare lyrics, shall we? Neil's: "I saw cotton and I saw Black Tall White mansions and little shacks. Southern man, when will you pay them back? I heard screamin' and bullwhips crack-

ing How long? How long?" Versus Lynyrd Skynyrd's race-baiting retort:

"Sweet home Alabama Where the skies are so blue In Birmingham they love the governor Now we all did what we could do

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Bush misreads election results; imperils country

By George E. Curry
Special to Sentinel-Voice

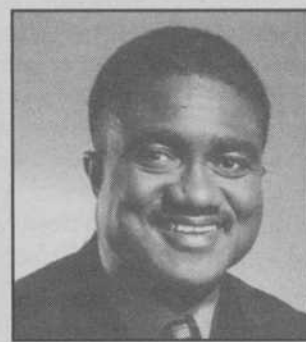
By assigning several of his top White House aides to cabinet posts for his second term — at the Justice Department, at the State Department and at the Department of Education — George W. Bush seems poised to leave even more of his Right-wing imprimatur

on the federal government over the next four years. Instead of uniting the country, as he initially promised, the only thing Bush has united is his political power.

Before all the votes had been counted in Ohio, Vice President Dick Cheney and others in the administration were chortling that Bush had received a mandate from voters on Nov. 2. That would have been laughable if the news media weren't acting more like lapdogs than watchdogs. White House correspondents have been subjected to such intense spin from the White House that I expect their heads to fall off at any moment.

Researchers at Fairness and Accuracy in the Media (FAIR) have done an excellent job, as usual, debunking the idea that Bush received anything approaching a mandate. Their findings are posted on their Web site, www.fair.org.

Most troubling has been the eagerness of the media to lap up White House drivel. Journalists have parroted the White House's



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"mandate" line so frequently and so consistently that it has become difficult to distinguish between the media and those inside the White House who scheme every day to exploit the media. Look how the "mandate" propaganda played out:

The Boston Globe — Senator Kerry's hometown

paper — wrote that Bush's victory gives him "a clear mandate to advance a conservative agenda over the next four years."

The Los Angeles Times observed, "Bush can claim a solid mandate of 51 percent of the vote."

A USAToday headline proclaimed, "Clear Mandate Will Boost Bush's Authority, Reach."

The Washington Post said Bush received a "clearer mandate" this time around, as though Bush, with fewer popular votes than Gore in 2000, had a mandate four years ago.

Chris Matthews of MSNBC said, "President Bush wins the majority of the vote and a mandate for his second term."

CNN's Wolf Blitzer predicted that Bush is "going to say he's got a mandate from the American people, and by all accounts he does."

NPR's Renee Montague said, "The president's people are calling this a man-

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Civil rights losing in hard fight against civil wrongs

By James Clingman
Special to Sentinel-Voice

"All things are legitimate [permissible — and we are free to do anything we please], but not all things are helpful. All things are legitimate but not all things are constructive." First Corinthians 10:23 Amplified Version

"Everything is permissible — but not everything is beneficial. Everything is permissible — but not everything is constructive." First Corinthians 10:23 New International Version

"Just because you have the right to do something does not mean it is right for you to do it." First Corinthians 10:23 Simplified Clingman Version

We celebrated the 40th anniversary of the signing of the Civil Rights Act on July 2, 2004. For 40 years, after fighting for "civil rights," Black people have the right to share restrooms, restaurants, theaters, water fountains and various other facilities and accommodations with White people. Unfortunately, after winning our rights, some of our leaders made us believe they were "civil privileges" rather than civil rights.

Most of those who fought that battle were brave, dedicated, committed, brothers and sisters, both Black and White, who were determined to make much needed changes in this country's policies toward the sons and daughters of enslaved Africans. They fought for choice, not privilege. They won the choice

to sit wherever they wanted on public transportation and at whatever table they wanted in any restaurant. They won the choice to drink from any water fountain they chose, and they won the choice to shop wherever they wanted.

Freedom to shop wherever they wanted? Was that a right or a privilege? Was it a choice? I would say it was a right, a choice, but certainly not a privilege. So what have we done with our civil rights for the past 40 years? In my estimation, we have exercised them as though they were privileges.

Some of our leaders, at that time, put so much emphasis on the "victory" they had won that it seemed to many, I suppose, that we should now take full advantage of our newfound freedom, our newfound privilege, by spending as much of our money as we could at those businesses that did not want us in their stores and restaurants in the first place. In the process of exercising our civil privileges, we abandoned our own businesses, walked away for our economic base, and deserted the very bastions of economic empowerment that would have propelled us to the heights we seek today.

Black people in this country, as it faces an impending economic meltdown, along with most of the citizens of the United States, are



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now suffering from a dearth of economic advantages, as opposed to pre-1964, when we at least owned and controlled the basic infrastructure necessary to take care of ourselves and to spend more of our money among our own businesses.

When we gained our civil rights, we started committing civil wrongs against one another — and we continue that fatal trend today, 40 years later. Yes, we have the right to spend our money wherever we choose, but it's not a privilege. We have the right, but that does not mean that it's right for us to do it. As the scripture says, it's permissible but not constructive, not beneficial.

Why do we continue to commit civil wrongs against one another? Are we still enraptured by the notion that we can enter someone else's business and show them how much money we have to spend? Are we willing to continue seeking the privilege of giving our money to folks who hold us in disdain? Or, are we willing to take an honest look at our past 40 years in this country and admit that we have really messed up? Are we willing to make the changes necessary to move from the civil wrongs we have committed against ourselves and our children, and return to building and owning income-producing assets? If so, let's consider doing

something about it right now.

There are several movements across this country, which I have written about many times, that Black people can — and should — use to reverse our civil wrongs. If you read this column on a regular basis, or have read my books, you know what they are. You also know how urgent our economic transformation is to the future of our race. Thus, after literally forcing White folks and others to take our money, and after walking away from our own businesses, and virtually boycotting them for 40 years, it is time for us to admit our civil wrongs and commit, once and for all, to using our money to help ourselves.

We have made every other group in this country wealthy. I did not say rich; I said wealthy. We insisted they allow us to cavort with them, to patronize them, to sit with them, and to mingle with them, all the while they were figuring out how to take advantage of our desire to do so.

Now we spend the vast majority of our money with those same folks and we wonder why they continue to treat us the way they do. Don't you think we are smart enough to see that we were played and that we have even played ourselves? If so, let's change it. We won the right to choose by winning our civil rights, but we lost our economic base by committing civil wrongs against one another.

James E. Clingman is an adjunct professor at the University of Cincinnati's African-American Studies department.